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New York

President:	Mr. Romulo	(Philippines)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Katti
	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	Benin	Mr. Idohou
	Brazil	Mr. Valle
	China	Mr. Cheng Jingye
	Denmark	Mr. Moeller
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Greece	Mr. Valinakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Romania	Mr. Baconschi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Rogachev
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Shareef
	United States of America	Mrs. Patterson

Agenda

The role of civil society in conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes

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05-51380 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The role of civil society in conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Canada, Peru, Slovakia and Switzerland in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure and the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I welcome the participation of Mr. Paul van Tongeren, Executive Director of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention; Mr. Andrea Bartoli, Chair of the Columbia University Seminar on Conflict Resolution and faculty coordinator of the Columbia University Conflict Resolution Network; and Mr. Vasu Gounden, founder and Executive Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of members of the Council to document S/2005/594, which contains the text of a letter dated 7 September 2005 from the Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

On behalf of the members of the Council, I welcome the Ministers of Denmark, Greece, Peru, Romania, Slovakia, Switzerland and the United Republic of Tanzania.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

As another measure to optimize the use our time in order to allow as many delegations to take the floor as possible, I will not individually invite speakers to take seats at the table or invite them to resume their seats at the side of the Council Chamber. When a speaker is taking the floor, the Conference Officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Paul van Tongeren, Mr. Andrea Bartoli and Mr. Vasu Gounden.

Before giving the floor to those speakers, I shall give the floor to Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Political Affairs, to make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Kalomoh: First of all, I would like to apologize on behalf of the Secretary-General, who, due to an unavoidable scheduling conflict, is unable to deliver his statement at this important meeting. He has asked me to do so on his behalf, and I have the pleasure of delivering that statement.

> "Last week, world leaders renewed their commitment to promote a culture of prevention of armed conflict as a means of effectively addressing the interconnected security and development challenges of our time. They also pledged to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations for the prevention of armed conflict. And they decided to establish a Peacebuilding Commission that will play a key role in preventing the recurrence of armed conflict.

"Civil society made a significant impact on the process leading to the summit. Last June's hearings marked a new and welcome step forward in United Nations-civil society relations. So did the Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding, held in New York last July, where 500 representatives from civil society around the world gathered to adopt an action agenda.

"My message to you today is simple: civil society's role in conflict prevention needs to be fully recognized. Both the United Nations and regional organizations have to do more to tap into civil society's comparative advantages, namely a strong local presence and experience. Local ownership and participation are essential for the success of peace processes, be it conflict prevention, peacemaking or peacebuilding. Dialogue, transparency and accountability must remain a priority.

"Civil society is often far out in front of us in identifying new threats and concerns. This is certainly one of its most important roles. Civil society organizations are also indispensable in 'track-two' and 'people-to-people' diplomacy, which is often integral to successful official diplomacy and post-conflict political and reconciliation processes. At times, they can reach parties on the ground that Governments or the United Nations cannot reach.

"Civil society organizations can also complement the work of the United Nations by offering valuable analyses originating in the field, by forging partnerships to implement United Nations decisions, by increasing the sustainability of United Nations operations and by creating networks to advocate for peacebuilding. For all these reasons, civil society organizations would have an important role to play in the deliberations of the Peacebuilding Commission.

"The 2005 world summit produced some remarkable commitments from Member States. However, for these words to be turned into action, and for prevention and peacebuilding strategies to become more effective, all actors — Governments, international financial institutions, regional organizations and civil society — need to work together as partners.

"I am committed to doing my part, and I urge you all to do yours."

The President: I thank Mr. Kalomoh for his statement. I now give the floor to Mr. Paul van Tongeren, Executive Director of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention.

Mr. Van Tongeren: I am honoured to be invited to this meeting, and I thank the representative of the Philippines very much for this invitation to address the Council today.

Promoting peace and security in the twenty-first century requires a fundamental shift in how we respond to the challenge of violent conflict. It is intolerable that millions of civilians die from violent conflict at a time when the international community has the knowledge and resources to prevent it. As described in the *Human Development Report 2005*, "Violent conflict is one of the surest and fastest routes to the bottom of the [Human Development Index]", and it endangers the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In response to the recommendation on the role of civil society in the Secretary-General's 2001 report on the prevention of armed conflict (S/2001/574), civil society organizations from around the world organized themselves and formed the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. After three years of dialogue, consultation and research all over the world, 15 regional action agendas and finally one global Action Agenda on conflict prevention and peacebuilding were formulated. These action agendas were presented at the Global Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding, which took place in July of this year, here in this building. In the global Action Agenda, we call for a fundamental change in dealing with conflict: a shift from reaction to prevention. We believe that this shift is not only possible but that it is much more cost-effective.

Prevention is at the heart of the United Nations mission and was the founding purpose of the United Nations 60 years ago. Still, this is not reflected in the current design of the United Nations. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "In larger freedom", peacebuilding is still a "gaping hole in the United Nations institutional machinery" (*A/59/2005, para. 114*).

Following the two high-level reports of 2004, we propose that the United Nations take up a stronger steering and catalyzing role, and act as a convener in the field of peace and security. We recommend that the post of Under-Secretary-General for Peace and Security be created.

Regions or countries prone to conflict should be better monitored. Better early warning indicators and a peacebuilding infrastructure should be developed, based on local capacities for peace.

We believe that it is very important that an update of the 2001 prevention of armed conflict report be released soon. The progress report planned for 2004 is still on hold. We hope, however, that now that the summit is over, that report will be published soon.

In addition, we propose a more in-depth review of the role of the United Nations in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding be undertaken in 2010, by organizing a multi-stakeholder conference on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, aiming for a coherent and integrated approach on prevention and a mid-term review of the Peacebuilding Commission, with input from regional organizations and civil society.

Due to time limitations, I cannot reflect too much here on all the different important roles of civil society, so I will simply say that we strongly support Kofi Annan's conclusion in the Security Council debate on the role of civil society in post-conflict peacebuilding just last year (see S/PV.4993), when he stated that the partnership between the United Nations and civil society is not an option, but a necessity.

The Security Council should reform its working methods to increase legitimacy, inclusiveness and representativity by implementing the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations — the Cardoso panel — to strengthen the Council's engagement with civil society and by deepening and improving the planning and effectiveness of the Arria formula meetings by lengthening lead times and covering travel costs to increase the participation of actors from the field. Security Council field missions should meet regularly with appropriate local civil society leaders. Further, the Council should support the establishment of an advisory or expert group on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, to consist of practitioners, academics and representatives of civil society organizations. Within the United Nations country teams a focal point for prevention and peacebuilding should be appointed.

Finally, we support the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission and believe its effectiveness would be enhanced through cooperation with civil society with peacebuilding experience. It should report to the Security Council and to the General Assembly. We ask the Council to support proposals to include in the mandate of the Peacebuilding Commission the establishment of formal country-level mechanisms such as civic forums to ensure that local civil society is a key partner in its efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the Columbia University Seminar on Conflict Resolution and faculty coordinator of the Columbia University Conflict Resolution Network, Mr. Andrea Bartoli.

Mr. Bartoli: I thank the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines, His Excellency Alberto Romulo, and through him the Government of the Philippines and its representatives here in New York, who organized this open debate during its presidency of the Security Council.

I have been asked to present the perspective of academic centres as part of civil society's contribution to conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes, through the lens of the organization I founded in 1997 at Columbia University, here in New York City: the Center for International Conflict Resolution. By the way, some students from the Center are here in the room and I am very pleased to see that. My intuition is that this contribution involves understanding and experimentation.

Human yearning for peace is infinite, and yet at times it lacks proper words and images. Individuals, groups, States and nations fall prey to their own limits as they explore the challenging world in which they exist, to which they belong, for which they toil. The first academic contribution to conflict prevention is therefore to offer, sharpen and sustain the language that allows all of us, as the human family, to understand the conflicts in which we live, the ones that are coming and the ones we fail to recognize.

That is why we must be grateful for the labour and creativity of so many scholars who have given us the words to describe, understand and respond to the

world of conflicts. Without academia we would not use such words as "development" or "genocide" the way we do today. Even the word "prevention" would not be in our vocabulary as it currently is. So I am sure that all in this Chamber are grateful, as I am, to those giants who gave us the International Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations. Many of them were academics, and dedicated to the human family.

They came from all backgrounds and belief systems, for indeed conflicts are a common human experience. All conflict resolution literature is in agreement that conflicts are a part of life, along with disagreements, differences and distances. Conflicts are most commonly solved without resort to violence; actually, most of the time the use of violence exacerbates them.

The second contribution of academia is thus the study of ways in which conflicts have been constructively addressed without resorting to violence. This research is not an empty promise; rather it is recognition that all of us as humans have been fighting against each other and solving conflicts since time immemorial. All human societies have dealt with the fundamental issue of conflict prevention and resolution. All human societies have developed, together with their own language, ways to describe and address conflict constructively.

We must be simultaneously proud and ashamed of this legacy, because on the one hand no human society has ever been completely deprived of peace and on the other hand no human society is ever free from the threat of impending violence and destruction. Academic centres are taking this legacy seriously, incorporating it into the experimentation that is needed to address the impending challenges of the moment.

The role of academics today, as interpreted by a centre of higher learning such as the Center for International Conflict Resolution, is to keep looking for what is still not apparent and to give a name to violence and peace in a way that is attentive to the challenges of the moment, intelligent in its approach, rational in its methods and responsible in its prescriptions. It is a contribution of understanding and experimentation.

An example comes to mind, such as the one advanced by Professor Su Hao, a colleague at the Foreign Affairs University in Beijing, who is working on conflict prevention in a regional context, or by our colleagues at the Swiss Peace Foundation, who are so dedicated to the Early Recognition of Tension and Fact-Finding (FAST) risk profile, an experimental way to provide early warning.

Being part of the Community of Sant'Egidio — the only non-governmental organization cited by the Secretary-General in his 2001 report on the prevention of armed conflict (S/2001/574) — which I have represented at the United Nations since 1992, I had the good fortune of contributing to the peace process in Mozambique. We discovered then that while all can make war, at the same time all can make peace, civil society included. That discovery led to a renewed search in a spirit of thoughtful experimentalism. Columbia University welcomed this innovative approach, which made it possible for the university to become a meaningful point of reference, a space of synthesis and responsibility in the field of international conflict resolution.

Traditionally, universities have been stronger than other sectors of civil society. By educating the elites and often being supported by governing forces, universities have frequently used their autonomy to foster a human search beyond the constraints of institutionalized politics. Universities have been places in which *stabilitas* encounters innovation.

I therefore want to recall that on 26 and 27 April 2006 the prayer for peace that was initiated by Pope John Paul II in Assisi in 1986 will be held in another centre of higher learning: Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. At a time when the use of religion by violent forces seems to be so prevalent, it is indispensable to strengthen the synergy between people of good will and people of learning: believers and seekers, academics and decision makers.

I come from a country, Italy, which takes pride in its many old universities. Names such as Bologna and Padua are recognized everywhere in the world as centres of higher learning. With them, a network of centres of higher learning is now capturing the whole globe from Baghdad to Bombay, from Beijing to Boston. Countries must be proud of their centres of higher learning, and we should all welcome the wisdom of the Hadiths, authentic sayings attributed to the prophet Muhammad, such as "He dies not who gives life to learning".

The Security Council is an extraordinary, unique human space. I hope it will keep its openness to academic learning. Since 1998, the Center for International Conflict Resolution has contributed a course on conflict prevention taught at United Nations Headquarters for United Nations officials, diplomats from the missions and Columbia University students. Ingenuity will lead us to try new solutions and new forms of dialogue and interaction. This very open debate is proof of it.

It is my hope that through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which held a very promising meeting last year on academic contributions to peace sponsored by the University of Rome/La Sapienza, and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, which held its plenary conference here just two months ago, and other channels, free and open communication will be maintained among all centres of learning and the United Nations system.

Let us keep learning together. It was beautifully put by the old rabbis, speaking about shared learning: *O chevruta o mituta*, an Aramaic expression that we can translate as "Either together or dead". Indeed, let us keep learning together and stay alive together.

The President: I now give the floor to the founder and Executive Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, Mr. Vasu Gounden.

Mr. Gounden: Let me take this opportunity to thank the President, his Permanent Mission to the United Nations and his Government, as well as the other members of the Security Council for giving civil society this opportunity to present our views before this body. Your initiative, Mr. President, is a sober reminder of the changes taking place in international relations.

In the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, the Chairman of the Panel and former President of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, indicated that,

> "The rise of civil society is indeed one of the landmark events of our times. Global governance is no longer the sole domain of Governments. The growing participation and influence of non-State actors is enhancing democracy and reshaping multilateralism. Civil society organizations are also the prime movers of some of the most innovative initiatives to deal with emerging global threats". (*A/58/817, p. 3*)

It is in this context and with the understanding that the complex conflicts of today require the collective wisdom and effort of all sectors of society in the emergence of a new form of multilateralism based on the opening of the Charter of the United Nations — "We the peoples" — that we the peoples — States, civil society and the private sector — need to forge a new partnership. That partnership must reject distinctions based on wealth and power and on geographic size and population. It must be based on collective wisdom, with each partner driven by its own comparative advantage, expertise and opportunity.

At the outset, let me indicate that we recognize and respect that the settlement of political disputes between States and within States is, and should remain, the domain of nation-States. Civil society should complement the role of nation-States and remain outside the formal structures of the United Nations, since its strength, legitimacy and flexibility derive from its independence.

However, today conflicts are multifaceted and complex in nature, and they increasingly require a comprehensive strategy involving a multiplicity of actors, including civil society. There are many stages to a conflict and many dimensions to a conflict. Depending on the complexity of the conflict all those stages and dimensions require different actors with different strategies and skills.

In our own case, as the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), we have met and worked with warlords in Somalia when many States where not able to meet with them. We have trained and prepared rebel groups in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for negotiations, and they will testify to the role that we have played in empowering them to enter negotiations. We have also assisted the Facilitator for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, former President Masire of Botswana, to prepare his mediation team and advised him on mediation process and strategy during the actual talks.

As we speak, almost 30 United Nations officials from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are being hosted by our institution in South Africa, for a course for senior mission-leaders. In January 2005, we completed and submitted the post-conflict

reconstruction framework document for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) after we were commissioned by NEPAD to develop and manage a process for the development of such a document.

These initiatives are practical examples of civil society and governmental and intergovernmental cooperation towards conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes.

I turn now to one of the most important developments to come out of the United Nations reform process: the Peacebuilding Commission. Its introduction and purpose could not have been timelier for a country like Burundi, which has just emerged from conflict but faces huge challenges, has very few resources, and is confronted with competing donor and non-governmental organization (NGO) priorities for assistance. The need could not be more urgent for the centralized coordination of development efforts that bring all actors together to work out, with the Government of the host country and the local population, a post-conflict reconstruction agenda and a sustainable development agenda. However, the Commission will be stillborn unless it can mobilize the broadest set of relevant constituencies. To do that, it must make itself accessible to all relevant actors at the local, national, regional and international levels through all the forums of the United Nations.

In the minute remaining, let me indicate that, apart from a new partnership, the world needs a shared consensus. All good conflict management practitioners know that one cannot make headway in resolving a conflict without first getting the conflicting parties to have a shared understanding of the problems confronting them. In building a new partnership, we need to develop a shared consensus on the nature, causes and manifestations of the security threats that confront the world today. With such a shared understanding, common solutions will follow.

In 1945, we united under this body to bring peace to the world. Today, 60 years later, we are divided about how to bring peace to the world. Let not future generations say that here stood a people who presided over a United Nations of divided nations. Let us forge a new partnership and build a new consensus.

The President: I invite His Excellency Mr. Per Stig Moeller, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, to take the floor.

Mr. Moeller (Denmark): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for directing the attention of the Security Council to the importance of civil society's involvement in conflict prevention and in the pacific settlement of disputes. I also welcome the participation of representatives from civil society in today's meeting, and I am glad to have heard what they have said.

At the outset, I would like to fully associate myself with the statement to be made later this morning by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

The approaches that we take to peacebuilding and to conflict prevention must be similar. If we are unable to nurture and build sustainable peace, we cannot prevent new conflicts from breaking out or, indeed, prevent old ones from relapsing into new violence. Consequently, our efforts to establish a Peacebuilding Commission are also relevant from a conflict prevention perspective. The establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission is an inspiration of hope for those who suffer from the effects of armed conflicts. And it brings hope to those civil society organizations and individuals who work tirelessly to raise their societies out of the ashes of conflict. As agreed at the summit, we must ensure that this new body begins its work no later than at the end of this year.

The role played by civil society in conflict prevention is not only important; it is indispensable. Allow me to mention just a few of the situations in which we would be at a loss without civil society.

First, the sustainable, long-term solution for the protection of human security is to address the root causes of conflict. To tackle those causes, it is imperative to involve local civil society. Dialogue and cooperation with civil society is key in our efforts to reach the overarching goal: the continued peaceful development of democratic and pluralistic societies.

In Denmark, we have realized the pivotal role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in conflict prevention. In our Africa Programme for Peace, we are contributing to the work of civil society to enforce its important role in the prevention of local conflicts. Danish NGOs play an active and crucial role in Danish-funded projects throughout the world, and they work closely with local NGOs.

Secondly, a basic prerequisite for conflict prevention is early warning. In order to take timely and sufficient steps to avoid the eruption of conflict, it is imperative that the necessary knowledge and information be available. Early response demands early warning.

No one is better placed to spot the early signs of a potential conflict than civil society. National and international NGOs, national human rights institutes, women's organizations and representatives of minorities and indigenous peoples are all examples of civil society representatives who possess first-hand knowledge of rising tensions in fragile societies. We depend on members of civil society to sound the alarm, and we should listen to them and act when necessary.

Finally, civil society often plays a crucial role as peace facilitators and local partners for mediation between parties in conflict. In societies torn by ethnic, political or religious tension and distrust, the difference between open conflict and reconciliation can be the active involvement of civil society. Confidence-building between estranged parties is the foundation for building the peace.

We have seen how the activities carried out by NGOs often have great impact. Let me cite some examples. In northern Uganda, Denmark supports the activities of Save the Children, which are aimed at creating an enabling environment for peaceful coexistence and peacebuilding. Those activities include peace clubs in schools, parents' support groups to promote conflict prevention and the dissemination of children's peace messages through the mass media. Another example is mine action. A Danish NGO in Afghanistan runs a programme in which ex-combatants are hired to help in mine clearance. In that way, they become peaceful breadwinners, thereby significantly reducing the risk of their recruitment by destabilizing elements.

Civil society cannot play the role of peace facilitators in a vacuum. Civil society needs the support and understanding of national Governments and of the international community, including the Security Council. We need to provide a secure environment in which representatives for civil society can operate; political encouragement and economic support are of equal importance. Capacities for prevention and peacebuilding must be strengthened through further information-sharing, coordination and mutual assistance between Governments and civil society. In that regard, the work of the Peacebuilding Commission would benefit greatly by the involvement of civil society.

The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, the Security Council cannot discharge those duties in solitude. As it is true for civil society, it is equally true for the Council that it cannot play its vital role in a vacuum. The interdependency and the interrelation between the actions taken by the Security Council in New York and the role played by actors in the field, including civil society, call for close dialogue and cooperation.

One concrete step is to have an NGO focal point in United Nations integrated missions. In civil-military planning and in peacebuilding activities, civil society should be considered a partner and a contributor. In general, the views of civil society should be reflected in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on mandated operations.

Another appropriate area is the development of conflict prevention strategies. The Council should explore new ways in which to establish a cooperative framework with civil society. We could — as the presidency has done today — take greater advantage of the opportunity to invite representatives of civil society to our open meetings, or we could hold traditional informal meetings with NGOs.

In conclusion, dialogue, information-sharing and cooperation between Member States and civil society in New York and, most important, in the field constitute important elements in ensuring that peace and prosperity are not just an aspiration but a fact.

The President: I invite His Excellency Mr. Teodor Baconschi, State Secretary for Global Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Romania, to take the floor.

Mr. Baconschi (Romania): My delegation is gratified by your presence, Sir, in the chair of the Security Council. I must say that the Council summit held recently under the Philippines presidency made a powerful impression on us. I wish to congratulate you on arranging a timely — and, I trust, rewarding — discussion on the potential of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to contribute effectively to United Nations action aimed at averting

conflict or settling disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter. That is a rich topic, as it relates to the role of important partners in the peace efforts of the United Nations and of its Security Council. I shall nevertheless be brief, since Romania associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

The international community's approach to conflict prevention and the settlement of disputes continues to evolve in response to the changing nature of threats to peace and security in today's world. In past years, the United Nations system has expanded its capacity for the early detection of potentially dangerous situations, for preventing the escalation of tensions and to help parties to manage and eventually settle peacefully their disputes. However, even when the analytical and planning capacities of the Organization are displayed at their finest, realities on the ground make clear that there is a continuous demand to further identify and put together additional resources.

Our debate today is therefore more than welcome as a means of fostering reflection on enhancing the capacity, knowledge, resources and tools of the United Nations to ensure better outcomes in conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Having acknowledged and taken stock of the ever-growing contribution of civil society in these processes, we should explore further avenues and modalities for its deeper involvement. The added value provided by the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations in the work of the United Nations has been repeatedly emphasized in this very Chamber, where we recognized that these components of civil society are highly instrumental in making a difference at practically all stages of a conflict and in ensuring that whatever political solutions emerge to end a conflict are durable and sustainable.

Such organizations are actively involved in conflict prevention, based on a series of assets such as firsthand knowledge of the situation on the ground and unhindered contacts with the relevant players. As a result, in certain cases, NGOs and civil society organizations are more effective in sensing emerging crises, thus becoming invaluable resources for a dedicated early warning system for international agencies acting in the field.

In other cases, such organizations are able to produce the most accurate assessment of the danger of escalation in a specific dispute, which is always a crucial element in halting a conflict before it actually breaks out. Moreover, unlike international involvement, which is occasional, temporary and fragmented, the continued presence of civil society creates opportunities to build long-term relationships, thus creating a sense of trust among the parties to a dispute as well as opening up more reliable and sustainable channels for dialogue. The longevity of their presence and their subsequently enhanced credibility provide civil society organizations with a superior capacity to access and influence actors involved in the peaceful settlement of disputes, and they allow them to explore innovative ways and means to assist in the process. Finally, since most of today's conflicts have at their core ethnic or religious issues, neutral actors such as multi-ethnic or inter-faith-based civil society organizations are in a privileged position to overcome sectarian divisions and foster better understanding among the religious and ethnic components of society.

Given the potential represented by the knowledge and intuitive understanding of civil society actors, emphasis should be placed on promoting an improved and upgraded cooperation between the United Nations system and civil society organizations, to make activities associated with conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes more sustainable and cost-effective. Conflict prevention encompasses modalities such as participation, empowerment and national ownership, enabling a timely reaction before a dispute reaches the conflict stage. The international community must help to foster home-grown political processes in which civil society shares ownership of prevention processes with the international community and local governmental actors.

Dialogue among civil society actors is to be encouraged and facilitated to allow for healthy debate, nurture transformations, build consensus and translate policy into practice. In countries where communities are distrustful of one another or where conflict has deeply eroded societal structures, there is a particularly great need to explore all effective models for participatory conflict prevention and dispute settlement, including, as appropriate, enhanced

cooperation between civil society organizations and the United Nations system and its relevant mechanisms and partners.

In that context, I would like to highlight the role of the media. By giving voice and visibility to all people — including and especially the poor, the marginalized and members of minority groups — the media are well placed to help remedy inequalities, corruption, ethnic tensions and the human rights abuses that form the root causes of so many conflicts. Since the worldwide toll of journalists and critical support staff killed covering the story of a conflict or a post-conflict situation has been spiralling, we should also contemplate more thoroughly the need to promote and ensure respect for freedom of expression and opinion, as well as the basic principles of international humanitarian law.

We witnessed on Friday the adoption of the outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005. We commend the recognition of the positive contribution of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the promotion and implementation of development and human rights programmes, which ultimately are key factors in the prevention of conflicts, and of the importance of their continued engagement with Governments, the United Nations and other international organizations.

The contribution of civil society to conflict prevention and management is also an important "lessons learned" chapter from the developing story of enhancing the relationship of the United Nations with regional organizations. Such an understanding of multilateralism is aimed at creating more appropriate avenues and mechanisms for cooperation with a view to the better implementation of our common tasks.

Mr. Valinakis (Greece): Mr. President, I wish to congratulate you for having convened this meeting on a most important and timely issue. I wish also to thank you for having provided us with a useful concept paper. Greece fully aligns itself with the statement to be made by the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

The prevention of violent conflicts lies at the heart of the United Nations mandate. In the past few years, many efforts have been made to increase the effectiveness of the Organization in this field and to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention.

The report of the Secretary-General of 2001 entitled "Prevention of armed conflict" gives conflict prevention a prominent place in the agenda of the United Nations and emphasizes its importance for the establishment of lasting peace and security. The same report and Security Council resolution 1366 (2001) clearly recognize that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society play an important supporting role in national efforts for conflict prevention.

We have also witnessed increasing activity on the part of the Security Council in the field of conflict prevention and closer interaction in this regard with civil society. This has been manifested in its various fact-finding and confidence-building missions to areas of potential armed conflict. The Council also receives and considers a significant number of reports containing information provided by NGOs concerning situations that threaten the political stability and prosperity of States.

Important conferences have also been held recently, and the recommendations that have been made could move the process significantly forward.

The prevention of conflicts is a difficult and complex activity that requires the involvement of many actors. Today the task of conflict prevention lies not only with national Governments and the United Nations but also with civil society, such as NGOs, the private sector and development agencies.

There has been a general realization that most of today's internal conflicts are caused mainly by weak governance, the absence of democratic institutions, large-scale abuses of human rights, lack of socio-economic development, systematic ethnic discrimination, the previous history of the conflict and its regional context.

In our view, civil society can play a crucial role in the prevention of conflicts by providing independent analysis of a particular situation, by addressing the root causes of conflicts at an early stage, by educating people on the horrors of war and by raising public awareness on those issues and thus mobilizing political will and action. Moreover, international and local NGOs, due to their flexibility, outreach and commitment, can respond rapidly to early signs of tensions that have the potential to escalate into a

violent conflict. NGOs can also provide a continuous platform for debate and a tool for action and hence secure greater responsiveness and accountability.

Civil society and NGOs complement the efforts of the United Nations. Indeed, in many of today's multifunctional peacekeeping operations, civilian and military tools are mutually reinforcing and play an important role in promoting lasting peace and development. In the post-conflict phase, civil society is engaged in numerous activities, such as promoting human rights and the rule of law, strengthening democratization, consolidating peace and reconciliation, disarming and reintegrating ex-combatants and providing civic education, training and research.

Although civil society and NGOs can play a vital role in the democratic process and in consolidating durable peace and stability, still their capacity, and particularly that of local actors, is weak. In our view, that capacity should be further built and developed. In that respect, closer and better coordination and cooperation with the United Nations and with regional and subregional organizations is needed.

The United Nations should also better integrate the views and insights of those important stakeholders into its policy measures on conflict prevention. The Security Council, in particular, should be aware of those views through the reports it receives on potential conflict situations. The Council should also take into consideration the views of local actors when visiting areas of potential conflict. The Arria formula meetings are particularly useful tools since they provide the Security Council with independent information concerning situations that could potentially destabilize a country. Those meetings have mobilized the opinions of Council members on the need for preventive action. We strongly support their continuation in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to stress my country's full support for all the conflict prevention activities of this Organization. We believe, however, that the future strategies of the United Nations in this area should involve mostly local actors and should build their capacity to prevent and resolve local conflicts. Durable peace can be established only if the needs of the people concerned are adequately addressed and their views and voice have been heard.

The President: I invite His Excellency Mr. Abdulkader Shareef, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania to take the floor.

Mr. Shareef (United Republic of Tanzania): I wish to thank the Secretary of State of the Philippines for convening this important session. I wish also to thank Mr. Paul van Tongeren, Mr. Andrea Bartoli and Mr. Vasu Gounden for their insightful presentations.

We find the topic of today's debate useful and relevant to that of last week's Security Council summit. Whereas the summit focused on the role of States and intergovernmental institutions in preventing and resolving conflicts, today's topic on the role of civil society in the same endeavour is a complementary imperative.

In today's conflicts and wars and in this era of terrorism the major victims are ordinary men, women and children. Civil society should, therefore, have a high stake in preventing conflicts, as they are the immediate beneficiaries of peace and security in every society. The role and effectiveness of civil society in preventing conflicts and promoting peace and security are enhanced by the extent to which civil liberties are enjoyed in that society: by permitting freedom of expression and association in shaping and influencing opinion and allowing for participation in political action on issues of conflict, peace and security at both the national and international levels.

The primary focus for action to prevent conflicts in a democratic society should be national parliaments. Citizens and their organizations are the constituencies to whom legislators are accountable. Civil society — as individuals or community organizations, with the help of the media — is strategically placed to influence the policies and decisions on conflicts and peace and to persuade or compel Governments to take timely and appropriate action to avert impending conflicts. To that extent, Governments should be partners with civil society in preventing conflicts.

Civil society organizations — especially institutions such as universities, research centres, the media and human rights groups — should be in the forefront in the early detection of systemic stresses and strains on society that could be the root causes of violent conflicts. Early warnings of impending crises have often come from civil society. The same organizations should generate awareness and spur early political action nationally, regionally and internationally to defuse and resolve problems which

could develop into violent conflicts and wars. That role requires organization, capacity-building and networking among civil society organizations with different mandates.

Civil society organizations have been instrumental in reducing or resolving conflicts between groups and nations by maintaining informal lines of communication to promote understanding. They have been useful in decreasing tension, anger, fear and misperceptions between conflicting parties. They have also been able to facilitate and prepare the groundwork for more formal negotiations. They should be encouraged to use their specialized knowledge, experience and resources in assisting conflicting parties to resolve their differences and foster reconciliation. Civil society organizations have the advantage of informality and are less politically constrained from taking action in a critical manner, but they should also remain constructive and responsible.

At the same time, we should be on our guard and not hesitate to take preventive action against sections of civil society that deliberately engage in propagating, inciting and fuelling conflicts. Only last week we were compelled to take action in a case of incitement to terrorism. Our memories of the virulent propaganda of Radio Mille Collines, which spread the ideology of genocide in Rwanda, are still fresh, and we are striving to moderate inflammatory journalism in sections of the media in Côte d'Ivoire to rescue the peace process there.

While acknowledging the positive contribution of civil society organizations in preventing and resolving conflicts, our practical experience in the Great Lakes region of Africa has taught us that proximity matters when it comes to preventive action. Our specific recommendation, then, is that civil society organizations near conflict areas should play a proactive role and seize the initiative to move Governments to take action to prevent and resolve conflicts. Other non-governmental organizations outside the neighbourhood of the conflict should play a complementary role.

Encouraged by Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the role of women's organizations in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region has been effective and encouraging. Women's organizations are currently playing an active role in preparing for the next Great Lakes region summit in Nairobi later this year.

Let me conclude by emphasizing the importance of partnerships in conflict prevention and resolution. We need to build an effective partnership between States and civil society organizations so that they can be twin pillars of conflict prevention and resolution efforts. We should also establish a firm collaborative partnership between States, civil society, regional organizations and the United Nations system that can help create a more peaceful world.

Finally, let us create meaningful partnerships between national, regional and international civil society organizations, including with the United Nations, at all levels. The Security Council will be able to make more and better informed decisions with input from civil society, as has been aptly demonstrated under the Arrias formula relationships.

The President: I invite His Excellency Mr. Eduard Kukan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, to take the floor.

Mr. Kukan (Slovak Republic): Slovakia appreciates and commends the efforts of the Philippines presidency of the Security Council, which took the initiative for our thematic debate today. We feel very strongly about the role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in conflict prevention and would like to add several observations in our national capacity and from our own experience.

We find it very reasonable and worthwhile that the Security Council would like to lend a helping hand in the area of prevention and conflict resolution to the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, an integrated, global programme for research, consultation and discussion, as well as to thousands of small activists on the ground at locations of emerging or full-on conflicts. For the same reason, it is necessary that we support the conclusions of a number of events jointly organized by the United Nations Department of Public Information and the NGOs.

The citizens of Central Europe had an opportunity to experience the strength of civil society in the 1990's. Civil society offered them a peaceful road to the resolution of inter-ethnic issues lingering from the past and served as a catalyst for political change. In Slovakia, we have very fresh memories of that period, when our country was overlooked at the corner of the international democratic community for our own political reasons. The period was a cradle of cooperation between forces oriented towards

democracy and like-minded civil society entities. Due to the aforementioned specific track, Slovak NGOs gained an assortment of practical knowledge, skills and experience, which can be seen as very specific civil society know-how.

Nowadays, the cooperation between Slovak diplomacy and NGOs is broadly used in several fields, such as domestic and foreign affairs, official development assistance and democratization processes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Such NGO engagement helps to avoid the risk of conflict and possible destabilization of the region as a whole.

The birth of this systematic cooperation dates back to the late 1990's. It was also the time when the bloodiest conflict in Europe since the Second World War, which took place in the former Yugoslavia, was coming to an end. In my country, we initiated the so-called Bratislava process, which involved, alongside democratic representatives from the former Yugoslavia, various Slovak NGO entities and those from the former Yugoslavia. The Bratislava process contributed its own part to peaceful political change in Belgrade and the fall of the Slobodan Milosevic regime.

In the last few years, civil society organizations in Central and Eastern Europe undoubtedly have demonstrated their capacity for tolerant and peaceful means of conflict prevention. I can well recall the respect for non-violence shown by youth movements and a variety of Ukrainian NGOs during the recent so-called Orange Revolution.

Finally, facing the threats and challenges of the twenty-first century, we believe that the United Nations needs to be able to intervene to avert regional and local conflicts more effectively. In order to enable the Organization to really do so, we are convinced that it might be of tremendous benefit for it to maintain a constant and effective dialogue with the NGO sector, a sector that would operate courageously at centres of conflict. This applies especially to prevention and post-conflict periods, because, during a conflict, NGO operations are objectively limited, perhaps with the exception of deliveries of humanitarian aid.

Therefore, let us follow the slogan, "cooperation is appreciated", also speaking of the contribution of NGOs to conflict prevention. Let us combine the same goals and diverse tools, and we can profit more for the benefit of us all.

The President: I invite His Excellency Mr. Oscar Maúrtua de Romaña, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru, to take the floor.

Mr. Maúrtua (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Minister for Foreign Affairs, for the manner in which the Philippines is carrying out its role as President of the Security Council, which involves this initiative to discuss the role of civil society in conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In the last decade, the nature of conflict has varied substantially. We are no longer dealing with conflicts between nation-States, but rather with armed domestic conflicts within States. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, more than 33 civilian conflicts have started or have been reactivated, leaving close to 5 million dead, 17 million refugees and serious humanitarian crises. Today, several of these domestic armed conflicts occupy a large part of this Council's agenda and have warranted the deployment of complex peacekeeping operations.

For Peru, the role of civil society — that is, organized non-governmental social actors such as NGOs, unions, business associations, academic groups, student and religious groups, among others — is fundamental in both the prevention of domestic armed conflict and their contribution towards peacemaking and national reconstruction efforts. The need to have a civil society whose primary role is the prevention of armed conflict is undeniable.

Since in this debate we are confining ourselves to the prevention of conflict and the role of civil society, I will focus my comments on three subjects: first, the conditions that lead to such conflicts; secondly, the action of civil society in the prevention of conflict; and finally, phenomena that threaten collective security.

As has been recalled at the current High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, security, development and respect for human rights converge in the prevention of conflicts — that is to say, it is the precarious levels of life and the exclusion affecting a great part of the population, particularly in the countries with the lowest indices of human development, that become a threat to security and where the majority of conflicts that we face today have their origin. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the majority of these conflicts take place in the African continent.

This is why we regard as very positive Council resolution 1625 (2005) of 14 September, which reaffirms the need to adopt a strategy for the prevention of conflicts that takes into account the basic causes of these conflicts and that pays special attention to building the preventive capabilities required in Africa.

Work on development policies, including building their own national capacities, is the primary preventive action those countries require. Thus, we need a new multilateral partnership for collective peace and security that tackles the various adverse factors that developing countries face, such as education, health, trade, investment, technology and foreign debt, among many others.

There are various ways civil society can and should contribute to conflict prevention, in relation to situations at risk of turning violent and to the transformation of the conditions that create those situations.

Civil society has the duty to warn of situations where political violence is imminent. It must fight for public freedoms, the freedom of expression and the construction of legitimate and democratic institutions that ensure the rule of law and good governance. It must keep watch on transparency in the public administration's use of resources, which are often scarce. It must be uncompromising with respect to corruption and be an active agent for denouncing the illegal traffic of small arms and light weapons and transnational organized crime.

Civil society must also be an agent of alternatives for scientific and technological development in order to optimize the management of natural resources. It must support preventive diplomacy and mediation, including through the peaceful settlement of conflicts, when it is entrusted with those tasks. Through the action of local and international non-governmental organizations, civil society also has an active role to play in helping to mobilize the international community's resources and to guide the best use of international cooperation, among other tasks.

In the end, when civil society does not contribute to conflict prevention, when its capacities are not called on or when its voice is silenced, it can end up caught in the problem of confrontation and polarization that generates violence, while the social fabric that it represents and in which it functions is torn apart. When there is no space in which civil society can act, the risk of an escalation of violence grows exponentially. That is why the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the future Peacebuilding Commission, maintains contact with civil society, not only for settling conflicts and laying the foundations for the national reconstruction of failed States but also for the prevention of such conflicts.

Thus, a number of practical mechanisms are needed so that those bodies remain informed of the situation of civil society through other actors, rather than exclusively through dialogue with government. Those contacts could include prestigious NGOs such as Doctors without Borders, Care International and Amnesty International and, above all, contacts with national civil society, with local NGOs that are part of the society in which a violent conflict is emerging.

Regrettably, in the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting, the focus on prevention is limited. It is therefore appropriate to encourage the mobilization of civil society in the prevention of conflicts. It is not only a question of avoiding violent conflicts that exacerbate poverty and underdevelopment, displace millions of people, destroy property and infrastructure and leave social scars that are very difficult to heal. It is more a human and, of course, economic issue. It is a question of providing resources for the development of societies before those funds later have to be spent on costly military operations and colossal reconstruction efforts, which are not necessarily successful.

Finally, I want to refer to potential conflict areas that some sectors of civil society have repeatedly brought to the attention of States. One such area is environmental degradation, which has exacerbated the destructive potential of natural disasters and, in some cases, has even provoked such disasters. Another is that of limited resources such as water. Peru, a highly diverse country whose topography encompasses the ocean, an arid coast, the Andes and the Amazon, is very concerned about such conclusions, which are based on studies that need to be expanded and furthered rather than hidden or watered down.

The report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (*A/59/565*) considered that environmental degradation and the destructive nature of natural disasters constitute a threat to global

security. Therefore, with the support of civil society, we must continue to carry out a strategic, shared vision of sustainable development whose three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — are given adequate consideration.

Peru aspires to join once again in the work of the Security Council next January, after more than two decades. If that comes to be, Peru will make the problems I have mentioned and the important role of civil society relevant elements in its approach to the complex situations on the agenda of this noble Council.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

Mrs. Calmy-Rey (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First, let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. Switzerland, as co-chair of the Group of Friends on conflict prevention, has a special interest in this important topic.

Civil society, whether at the local or international level, is well placed to send out early-warning signals of emerging crises; analyse the social and cultural roots of a conflict; broaden the range of issues to be addressed in a peace agreement in order to better reflect the full scope of public concerns; gain access to militant movements when official actors encounter practical or political difficulties; prevent, address and resolve disputes at the community level; promote respect for international human rights and humanitarian standards by all State and non-State parties; and promote social and political reconciliation in the aftermath of violence.

The involvement of civil society is useful not only in elaborating a peace agreement; it also offers a way to ensure an agreement's success. Peace settlements enjoy greater legitimacy and sustainability if they are anchored in societies and reflect the needs of the various sectors of the population.

In that context, two important questions need to be asked. First, at the institutional level, how can cooperation between the Security Council and civil society organizations be strengthened? Secondly, at the policy level, how can civil society's contributions in peace-settlement and peacebuilding efforts be better integrated?

With respect to the institutional level, I strongly believe that the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission, to which Member States have just agreed, is a valuable opportunity to promote civil society's involvement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Switzerland proposes the inclusion of the principal institutional actors of the United Nations in the deliberations of the Commission. I am thinking in particular of the chair of the United Nations Development Group, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and/or the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Those three institutions already have solid experience in cooperation with civil society. Furthermore, we propose that the Peacebuilding Commission directly involve representatives of civil society, academic institutions and the private sector when that is useful. Thus, rather than creating additional institutional frameworks for cooperation with civil society, we should elaborate a mandate for the Peacebuilding Commission that allows for the involvement of all relevant actors, including civil society.

In a more general context, I believe it is essential for the Security Council to have a genuine partnership with the Economic and Social Council, which possesses complementary expertise and privileged links with civil society. The new Peacebuilding Commission could provide a framework for strengthening such cooperation between the Council and the Economic and Social Council.

At the policy level, Switzerland welcomes the fact that the Security Council has been giving increased attention in recent years to reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction. I should like to encourage the Council to continue to explore how civil society can better contribute to those efforts. This could be done, for example, by systematically examining the past and the potential role of civil society in peace processes when designing peace operations and systematically applying the principles of resolution 1325 (2000) when assessing peace missions.

Women and girls are particularly affected by armed conflict. I therefore attach the greatest importance to the equal participation of women in peace and reconstruction processes. Sustainable peace agreements can be reached only if the entire population has a voice in shaping them. Resolution 1325 (2000) represents a milestone in that direction, and we must continue our efforts to translate it into action, in particular by supporting women's organizations working in the field in the service of peace.

The United Nations must serve as an example in involving civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The partnerships that already exist between the United Nations and independent institutions can provide a useful means of developing such civil society participation. Switzerland supports a number of institutions that have strong links with the United Nations, such as the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining; the Geneva Centre for Security Policy; the Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces; the Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policies and Conflict Research; the Small Arms Survey; and the Geneva-based War-torn Society Project International.

My country also actively supports civilian initiatives to promote peace, such as the Geneva Initiative, which had its origin in Israeli and Palestinian civil societies. That initiative, which is fully in line with and complementary to the third phase of the Quartet's road map, proposes a comprehensive and realistic model for a permanent agreement that takes into account the vital interests and aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians.

In conclusion, I should like to recall that Switzerland has extensive experience in cooperating with civil society organizations. We intend to continue our efforts to strengthen the participation of civil society in conflict prevention and settlement, as well as in peacebuilding.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and the 12 countries that have aligned themselves with this statement.

May I first thank you, Mr. President, for having arranged this debate. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh and our colleagues from civil society, Mr. Van Tongeren, Mr. Bartoli and Mr. Gounden, for the insights that they have bought to our discussion. It is good that we should hear those statements before contributing ourselves.

The European Union has cause to be grateful for the role that civil society has played over the past two decades in contributing to the prevention of violent conflict and peacebuilding throughout the world, including within the European Union's own neighbourhood. We recognize the contribution that civil society makes to strengthening democracy and promoting human rights, both within individual nations and at the global level. Civil society plays an essential role in all phases of the conflict cycle.

Let us be frank: there are different views among members of the Council on the legitimacy of some civil society organizations and on the role that such organizations should be allowed to play in comparison with that played by Governments. The European Union believes that all United Nations Member States should accept the legitimate right of civil society to express views, make recommendations and express concerns and disagreements with Governments, even though at times that may be a difficult process. It is through such genuine dialogue that democracy is strengthened and that Governments are better able to meet the needs of their people.

We should ensure — post-summit — that we all do more to prevent conflict. In that respect, the United Nations itself needs to be much more active. Governments and civil society must work closely together to reduce the risks of violent conflict breaking out. International and regional organizations must also engage purposefully with civil society if they are to be effective in addressing and managing conflict. With that objective in mind, the EU strongly supports many of the recommendations of the Cardoso report on United Nations-civil society relations, published one year ago.

Local civil society's understanding of points of tension can give useful early-warning indicators. For example, civil society can draw attention to violations of human rights, which can often be an early indication of incipient conflict. The EU believes that the new Human Rights Council should have clear means for interaction with civil society and that the High Commissioner for Human Rights should continue to engage with civil society regularly.

Interaction between civil society and the international community is vital if we are to carry out our responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity — as recognized, for the first time, at last week's summit. Civil society can also help reduce hostility and begin the rebuilding of trust between different groups that might otherwise resort to fighting. In particular, the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as we have just heard, is vital in

rebuilding the peace after conflict, just as resolution 1325 (2000) underlined.

For its part, the EU has given considerable resources to supporting civil society in its role in preventing and resolving conflict and in post-conflict peacebuilding. In the Sudan, the European Centre for Development Policy Management, supported by the international non-governmental organization, Saferworld, has facilitated capacity-building for civil society in both political dialogue and development programming. In Nepal over the past three years, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights has undertaken microprojects on empowerment and human rights education.

The EU has had a long-term confidence-building programme in Georgia, aimed at building capacity among a range of peacebuilding non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We also work closely with many international and national NGOs in developing strategies on conflict prevention and work on what to do about fragile States.

I would like to say a few words about the first Global Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding, about which Mr. Van Tongeren has already spoken to us. The Conference set out principles for the engagement of civil society in this field and agreed a wide-ranging agenda for action. We particularly agree with the Conference recommendation for a structural mechanism for consultation with civil society and the new Peacebuilding Commission. Like the three representatives of civil society and many other speakers, the European Union believes that proper interaction between civil society and the work of the Peacebuilding Commission will better permit the Commission to do its work. We need to profit from the experience and views of those working on the front line. We also agree that the Peacebuilding Commission might, in due course, play its own part in supporting States, at their request, when they are on the verge of lapsing or relapsing into conflict.

The paper circulated as food for thought for this meeting raised the question of collaboration between the Security Council and civil society in the development of conflict-prevention strategies.

When Security Council missions visit regions at risk of conflict, they should take time for meetings with local civil society, as Council missions to Africa have done in the past two years.

The Security Council should also continue, in our view, discussions with civil society here in New York. The Arria formula meetings are extremely useful for that purpose. Those meetings bring the Council reliable and independent information about the situation on the ground in a particular area of tension, and often new ideas for possible resolutions.

In addition to the Arria meetings, the Council should also consider inviting representatives from civil society to address it during its debates. We should do that more frequently.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the European Union's interest in seeing the dialogue between the Security Council and civil society strengthened. Let us be brave enough to listen to points of view from across the spectrum, because through this dialogue we will make better policies and have greater opportunities to ensure that those policies become effective. We all share an interest in the prevention of conflict, and civil society can and does make a vital contribution. We should recognize it and benefit from it.

Mr. Idohou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation thanks your country for having organized this public debate, which allows us to reflect further on conflict prevention, following the adoption of resolution 1625 (2005) on this question at the Security Council summit held on 14 September 2005. We listened with genuine interest to the contributions of the representatives of civil society on its role, and we express our deepest appreciation to them.

The emergence of civil society at the both the national and the international levels as an autonomous actor and as a force of change results from a remarkable awakening of the governed, and from progress in communications technology. This phenomenon is one of the essential characteristics of globalization. Organized society is hardly a recent phenomenon. As long ago as the nineteenth century, Tocqueville hailed the movement of associations in American society as reflecting citizen participation which could generate social progress. But never before in human history has civil society asserted itself so ambitiously to participate in decision-making in the

public sphere, in local communities, in national life and in international life.

While public power as represented by the State embodies the exercise of State authority, and leads to a given reality, civil society, for its part, is the seat of the moral conscience and the place where the aspirations and expectations of the governed are voiced. Civil society is a driving force for public protest and even an additional actor, although its purpose is in no way to supplant the State's governing function. It aims to contribute to the monitoring of the Government sphere and give legitimacy to its actions. When these functions are well understood on all sides, there can be at least a relationship of tolerance, but also one of mutual benefit and even of partnership, which makes it possible to develop a synergy that benefits society as a whole.

Civil society has real potential in shaping the public sphere and in acting as a social intermediary, and thus in the peaceful settlement of disputes and the prevention of violent conflicts. The complexity of problems and challenges related to preserving State stability and to the promotion of worldwide sustainable development requires a participatory national and international mobilization. The role of civil society is considerable in this. An effective conflict prevention strategy requires the active involvement of civil society in order to make best use of the comparative advantages of civil society. The Constitive Act of the African Union rightly emphasizes the need to establish a partnership between Governments and all segments of civil society.

Thanks to its involvement in society and its retention of an identity distinct from that of the State apparatus, civil society can contribute to early warning mechanisms. This function has become particularly well developed in recent years, where civil society has shown its capacity to organize the collection, analysis and assessment of first-hand information on underlying trends of national communities, which allows for the identification of sources of potential tension and latent conflicts that could escalate. The West African Network for Peacebuilding has been outstanding in this field, working to strengthen regional conflict prevention capacities, in close cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Civil society can encourage well-targeted locally-based action to reduce tension in crises and crucial phases of processes which could escalate out of control. By way of example, let us recall the calming and moderating role played by non-governmental organizations in the holding of elections, through, among other methods, civic education, education for tolerance and election monitoring in order to strengthen the candidates' confidence in the legality of the balloting, and so forth. Civil society thereby contributes to the promotion of a culture of peace in the countries concerned.

Civil society can contribute to mobilizing national and international solidarity to support self-help efforts of disadvantaged communities and people who are victims of social exclusion, above all when a scarcity of income causes increased rivalry for access to power in order to gain control of resources mobilized by the State.

Civil society can mediate between conflicting groups competing for power by promoting the consolidation of democratic institutions and the peaceful transfer of power and through its ability to lend legitimacy to those who govern. This role was clear in the central and recognized position of certain moral or religious authorities in the national conferences held in Africa in the 1990s, which served as forum for dialogue and arbitration of national conflict. The great majority of such forums, brought about peaceful regime change. This was the case in my own country.

Civil society can also help focus popular movements seeking peaceful regime change in a crisis of legitimacy or a breach of the national consensus, and can provide new, visionary, honest leadership to get a country which is in difficulty back on track.

Nonetheless, the structures of civil society can be operated effectively only when their level of organization and their influence on the society concerned so allow. It is in the interest of Government leaders throughout the world to be aware of the advantages of promoting the emergence of a responsible civil society at both the national and international levels. Such awareness can help civil society organizations acquire the means of best fulfilling their social role and can promote their mobilization at the international level, as well as their access to intergovernmental decision-making centres

where disputes are settled and where development and cooperation policies are defined at different levels. Here they can provide their local know-how in the field and can better determine the details of decisions made in order to contribute to their implementation or to provide oversight for them.

The Security Council is in the forefront of this new awareness. This has led, over the past several years, to the regular holding of Arria formula meetings with civil society organizations, which now go beyond international non-governmental organizations to encompass local non-governmental organizations, both in New York and, during Security Council missions, in the field. We reiterate here our support for the recommendations made by the Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, especially as regards the relations between the Security Council and civil society.

We also encourage the United Nations to study carefully the contribution of international NGOs and civil society to our reflection on the ways and means of ensuring better prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes, as summarized in the final document of the Forum held by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict at United Nations Headquarters from 19 to 21 July 2005. It contains very relevant recommendations for the coordination of consistent strategies for the promotion of conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): I am pleased to join previous speakers in welcoming you, Mr. Secretary, and in congratulating your delegation on convening this meeting on such a highly relevant subject. It is indeed an honour to have His Excellency Mr. Alberto Romulo presiding over our session today. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for his statement and welcome the valuable contributions made by Mr. Paul van Tongeren, Mr. Andrea Bartoli and Mr. Vasu Gounden.

For decades, our concept of security has been associated with military response. This unidimensional approach is now, however, being redefined to integrate root causes of conflict into the concept of security threat. Conflict prevention is directly dependent on a certain level of quality of life. Hunger, poverty, poor health and lack of education, although not necessarily the direct causes, are powerful factors in catalysing conflict.

It is time for the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, to consider managing the interconnection of various political and socio-economic factors in conflict situations. This approach makes explicit the need for an increasing role for civil society in conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes.

Citizen-based associations and movements, educational institutions, charities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and even corporations now show a growing understanding that they should also contribute to common efforts towards avoiding the scourge of conflict or preventing the relapse into conflict after a peacekeeping operation is deployed. Their participation is more than welcome and will be complementary to the initiatives of Governments.

The Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations concluded that the constructive engagement with civil society must promoted for the identification of global priorities and the mobilization of resources. According to the Panel, chaired by the former President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the engagement of civil society is not a threat to Governments, but a powerful way to reinvigorate domestic policies for the well-being of populations.

When peace processes are bei g implemented, the contribution of civil society is particularly relevant to promote inclusiveness and local ownership, including through increasing public awareness and turning public opinion in favour of peace initiatives. Their participation is also welcome in promoting reconciliation and education for peace.

A word must also be said for the need to explore synergies and complementarities among civil society, Governments, regional organization and the United Nations. Their efforts must be coherent and compatible with this Organization's legitimacy as the main global actor in peace and security.

I should stress the need for increased attention to the coordinated planning of our response to crisis with the help of specific mechanisms for that purpose in the United Nations. Accordingly, we hope the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission will be of much help.

Available instruments must be constantly improved and adapted to the changing needs of our

response to crisis. In particular, a joint reflection on the roles and responsibilities of different actors will allow the United Nations to devise increasingly efficient ways to mobilize and finance civilian capabilities on a global basis to assist countries threatened with conflict.

Meeting the complex changes of conflict prevention and the settlement of disputes cannot be attained without the mobilization of a wide range of actors and the ability to make full use of the expertise, resourcefulness and comparative advantages of all sectors of society. Before the eruption of conflict, early analysis, early warning and preventive diplomacy are sorely needed. And in a post-conflict phase, structural rebuilding and long-term reconciliation have become as important as military response.

In dealing with an ever-changing array of conflicts, increased attention has to be paid to all fundamental political, economic, social and humanitarian dimensions. The complexity and sensitivity of the United Nations role have multiplied our responsibilities. Our contribution to peace has been and must continue to be enriched by the active participation of civil society.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Mr. President, my delegation congratulates you on having convened this debate on the role of civil society in conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes. Also, I am grateful for the constructive and interesting statements by the representatives by civil society who are with us today: Mr. Paul van Tongeren, Mr. Andrea Bartoli and Mr. Vasu Gounden. I thank them for their statements, which will help us adapt to what is a new framework for the United Nations and for the Security Council.

Since the inception of the United Nations, the way in which societies evolve has been changing. This has been especially true in recent decades as new actors have been incorporated into the national decision-making processes, which had previously been conducted exclusively by Government representatives. As a consequence of this evolution, consultation with civil society is today an element that cannot be avoided in a nation's decision-taking process.

This evolution is positive because by giving decisions a better substantive base it contributes to better identifying priorities and allocating resources with a broader social consensus. This unquestionably leads to greater legitimacy for a Government's decisions.

At the international level something similar is happening; the participation of civil society at the United Nations, especially in recent years, has been constantly growing. Here, Argentina supports many of the recommendations set out in the report of the Panel chaired by former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil (A/58/817). This participation is translated into greater influence by public opinion, which has in turn brought greater democratization to the international system, at the same time helping to strengthen multilateralism.

The world today is much more interlinked than in the past. So, unfortunately, are conflicts. It has become evident that, by itself, a direct response to violence can eliminate neither the underlying conflict nor its causes.

The Security Council has therefore begun to develop new means of responding to conflict. Thus, it has modified classic concepts regarding sanctions and peacekeeping operations, which are now much more complex and more multidisciplinary, and has begun to venture into areas such as human rights, development, election monitoring and post-conflict reconstruction. We recall that our recent reform created the Peacebuilding Commission to provide a solution for armed conflicts that goes beyond the military and extends to all areas in order to achieve lasting peace.

In the future, it is very possible that the international community will have to move towards acting before conflicts, not after them; that is to say, acting preventively and proactively before conflicts develop. It is not enough to limit peacekeeping to rebuilding a damaged community; it is obviously better to try to avoid a conflict before it erupts.

In that context, it is appropriate to ask ourselves: what is the role of civil society in conflict prevention? As we know, a conflict expresses tensions existing within a society. The task of preventing those tensions from being channelled into violence requires that all sectors of a community be involved. States have the primary responsibility to protect their populations. However, conflict prevention goes beyond the State level and involves all of society's actors, not only Governments. It does not diminish, but rather increases, the responsibility of Governments towards their own citizens, since it includes the obligation to gather and take into consideration public opinion,

which naturally includes the views of civil society organizations.

Various civil society actors have prominent roles in that process. Public opinion is among the most important elements, but let us recall that there are others. In the framework of the Global Compact, for example, private sector activity is important. It can often contribute to post-conflict reconstruction and should be utilized in such areas as small-arms monitoring, ensuring compliance with Security Council-imposed sanctions and the sustainable exploitation and legitimate trade of natural resources.

A successful peacebuilding phase is the best guarantee for preventing the recurrence of conflict, as we said. Hence, the Peacebuilding Commission will be a valuable tool for interaction with civil society, particularly with women and communities, given their role in creating sustainable conditions for peace and reconciliation.

Another question that we should ask ourselves is: what role does civil society play in the work of the Security Council? Its influence is indisputable. How can we fail to recognize that warnings from many non-governmental organizations have helped the Council more than once to prevent potential massacres? How can we deny that inaction following such warnings has led to tremendous catastrophes?

We believe that the Security Council should systematically incorporate the contributions of civil society into its analytical processes. Today, there are various useful mechanisms for doing that. The easiest is simple consultation. Council member States can and should consult the opinion of members of civil society, not only in order to hear their points of view, but also to better evaluate their positions. A customary mechanism is, as we know, the Arria formula, which has already become a classic tool of the Security Council. My country believes that more frequent use of the formula will undoubtedly strengthen the Council's preventive role. Establishing more regular and more formal cooperative frameworks for work with civil society organizations, not only in the Security Council but also in groups of States, will serve to strengthen preventive work.

In conclusion, Argentina shares the Secretary-General's view that, in a world of interconnected threats and opportunities, we must respond effectively to current challenges and defend the cause of larger freedom. We will be able to do that only through extensive, profound and sustained global cooperation among all States, which will undoubtedly include relations of effective cooperation with civil society.

Mr. Rogachev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In today's global world, the fabric of international relations is ever more complex. The primary actors continue to be States; however, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other elements of civil society are increasingly involved in international activities. As a result, the challenges facing the United Nations in the areas of security and the peaceful settlement of conflicts are becoming more complex. International peace and security are being understood ever more broadly and, in particular, are acquiring an intra-State dimension. I am thinking, for example, of situations involving massive and blatant human rights violations.

The comprehensive nature of threats to international peace and security requires that we develop a comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention and for the peaceful settlement of disputes. In such a strategy, we believe, a useful role could be played by civil society, together with the efforts of States and organizations.

Civil society often acts as an important link between Governments and political groups of various kinds and helps to establish a dialogue between the parties to a conflict. The activities of civil society are closely intertwined with the issue of defending human rights. In many cases, relevant non-governmental organizations serve as indicators pointing to dangerous trends affecting human rights that could potentially lead to conflict situations. Therefore, those NGOs are an element of early conflict prevention. At the same time, we need to take into account the fact that information coming from NGOs may not be free of subjectivity.

Without active involvement by civil society in the extremely important initial phases of post-conflict peacebuilding, in which there is a particularly high risk of relapse into conflict, it is not easy to undertake stable, long-term efforts to restore normal public life, to ensure the irreversibility of the peace process, to guarantee the establishment of political institutions and to establish or restore judicial and law-enforcement systems. We are closely following the development of an initiative aimed at a global partnership to prevent

armed conflict. We are confident that that process, which is being promoted by components of civil society, will provide good support for conflict prevention efforts by States.

In conclusion, we believe that the practice that has been established, of interaction between the Security Council and non-governmental organizations, is commendable and in keeping with the Council's real needs in the area of conflict prevention and settlement. The Russian delegation will help to ensure that that useful cooperation continues in its current, tested formats.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): We appreciate the fact that non-governmental and civil society organizations are playing key roles in development, humanitarian relief, human rights and other activities. World leaders acknowledged this in their world summit outcome document last week by welcoming

> "the positive contributions of the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the promotion and implementation of development and human rights programmes" (*General Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 172*)

and stressed the importance of their continued engagement.

Similarly, in today's world, non-governmental and civil society organizations also play a significant role in conflict prevention and resolution and in the pacific settlement of disputes. My delegation is therefore very grateful to the Philippines, under the distinguished leadership of Foreign Minister Romulo, for the timely initiative to organize this meeting. I wish also to thank the three guest civil society groups for their contribution to the debate.

The causes of many of today's conflicts are often highly complex, multifaceted and intertwined. Consequently, their prevention and resolution requires a comprehensive strategy and approach that effectively address all related issues and phases of conflict involved. To that end, the efforts at conflict prevention and resolution undertaken by Governments and international interlocutors such as the United Nations can be made more effective if they are reinforced or supplemented by the parallel efforts of civil society organizations.

A variety of civil society organizations and groups, such as traditional community organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academe, religious organizations and other social groups have been making their unique contributions, bringing their individual capacities, experience and resources to bear in preventing, mitigating or otherwise addressing causes of conflicts.

For example, traditional organizations can support the peace process by mediating among the parties to a conflict. Academe can play a useful role in promoting confidence-building measures. In the field of humanitarian assistance and human rights, international and national NGOs lead the way on the ground. In efforts at poverty eradication and sustainable development, the nurturing of the private sector must be an important aim, given its key role in the pursuit of sustainable growth and development.

For these reasons, it is clear that dialogue and interaction between the Security Council and civil society must be strengthened. In fact, as has been mentioned by previous speakers, the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, chaired by former President Cardoso of Brazil, recommended in its report of June 2004 that

> "Security Council members should further strengthen their dialogue with civil society, with the support of the Secretary-General" (*A/58/817, p. 46*).

We agree with that recommendation. For some years the Security Council has been carrying on a dialogue with groups representing civil society under the Arria formula, which is a welcome process whose potential should be further exploited. Furthermore, in dealing with country- or region-specific conflicts, the Security Council has engaged during field missions in interaction with local civil society leaders, local and international humanitarian NGOs and other groups that represent, or are operational in, the affected countries or regions.

In the same vein, we are pleased to note that a number of encouraging activities are already in place or envisaged for the future. For example, concerning conflict prevention in Africa, the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa has held seminars inviting the participation of civil society organizations, and this is commended. In the field of United Nations

peacekeeping and in other peace operations, too, the support and cooperation of civil society is often critically important for their success. With that in mind, my delegation is planning to convene an informal meeting of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping, which I chair, inviting civil society groups to present their views and engage in dialogue with Member States on relevant issues.

Civil society is also expected to play a key role in promoting human security. For the first time in United Nations history, the concept of human security is reflected in as important a document as the 2005 world summit outcome document, adopted last week. In paragraph 143 of that document, world leaders stressed "the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair".

> Leaders recognized
>
> "that all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential."

The concept of human security calls for a comprehensive effort to address the various threats that individual persons and local communities face, and to that end the active involvement of civil society is critically important. The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security was established in part precisely to achieve that objective, namely by supporting projects of relevant United Nations agencies that specifically promote partnership with civil society groups, NGOs and other local entities. The Trust Fund that Japan has been promoting has funded 133 projects in 104 countries to date, including such projects as a local partnership for urban poverty reduction in Cambodia, assistance to local community learning centres in Nepal, rebuilding of local communities in north-east Sri Lanka, and support for the coping mechanisms of crisis-affected Congolese households.

In conclusion, through today's discussions, we are again reminded of the important role played by civil society in conflict prevention and settlement. As we follow the outcome document and rise to the common challenges of the day, the Security Council must further strengthen dialogue with civil society. We support all efforts that take us in that direction.

Mr. Cheng Jingye (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to begin by welcoming the fact that you, Mr. Minister, are presiding over this meeting. I also wish to thank the representatives of the three non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for their presentations.

The pacific settlement of disputes is one of the important principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Conflict prevention is also what the United Nations has been actively engaged in over the years. The General Assembly and the Security Council have both emphasized the importance of conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes in relevant resolutions.

It is clear that the primary responsibility in that regard lies with the Governments of the countries concerned. The United Nations and the international and regional organizations concerned also have important roles to play. This constitutes an important component of resolution 1366 (2001) and should be adhered to in future endeavours related to conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes.

We have noted that in recent years some civil society organizations have been playing an increasingly active role in conflict prevention. They have undertaken a great deal of useful work and played a complementary role in the international community's peace efforts, as confirmed by General Assembly resolution 57/337 and Security Council resolution 1366 (2001).

We believe that civil society should abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in their participation in activities related to conflict prevention and to the pacific settlement of disputes and, in their work in the field, maintain objectivity, impartiality and neutrality. This is imperative for their work to achieve positive results.

In their participation in conflict prevention, various civil society groups can put to good use their expertise and experience in various fields to promote dialogue and reconciliation. At the same time, civil society organizations must proactively cooperate with and assist the Governments concerned and the international community, especially the United Nations, and avoid encroaching on their primary roles or causing hindrances. Of course, the United Nations should also, in appropriate ways, listen to the views and proposals of civil society.

In brief, we hope that civil society organizations will continue to play their own constructive roles in conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like first of all to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on having organized today's discussion. This meeting and the discussion we are embarking upon are a clear demonstration that the international community today values the contribution that players other than States can make to preventing and settling conflicts around the planet. That in itself is a welcome development.

Over the past 15 years civil society has regained its role, and today the companies, unions, associations, and academic institutions — in short, the NGOs in their totality — are receiving deserved acknowledgement of their place in one of the founding missions of our Organization: the role of civil society in conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

How does civil society play that role? First of all by participating in discussion. When there is discussion in a society criticizing the excesses of public authorities, experience shows that it is much more difficult for a Government to distance itself from the rule of law and, more generally, from good governance. The support provided by the international community to strengthening civil society has therefore become one of the most meaningful elements of the in-depth action to prevent conflict.

But civil society does not have the same political legitimacy as institutions. They need to gain that legitimacy, which cannot be done overnight. I am encouraged, however, by the progress made worldwide in acknowledging civil society's role, even in the most fragile countries.

Let us not forget in this respect the role of women and their associations in preventing crises by minimizing their worst effects and by taking action to remedy them. How many times have we been struck by their contribution in the Great Lakes region — a contribution that has been recognized by the Council and one that France fully supports.

Nevertheless, we must recognize in this discussion that, like political society, civil society can also be acting wrongfully. The non-governmental actor is sometimes, unfortunately, the proxy for an unscrupulous State. At other times, though thankfully not often, it can even be the vector of violent, criminal action, as the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tanzania has just underscored in his statement. And in some cases, too, one of the monstrous manifestations of civil society can be an actual mafia.

However, thankfully, civil society is most often a powerful aid to peace. I was simply observing that we should always remain vigilant. Our Council is fully committed to the role of civil society in post-conflict situations.

In the wake of the decision taken by our heads of State and Government to establish a peacebuilding commission, I would like to highlight one point: no just, lasting peace can be established through the efforts of the State alone. The case of Mozambique, moreover, illustrates this point. Private actors can contribute, as in Mozambique, in the settlement of conflicts. The robustness of any peace agreement depends on the extent to which the emerging society remains active, critical, involved, independent — in short, a civil society.

We also need to pay tribute to the efforts of NGOs in the implementation of reconstruction programmes, such as those in the field of demining, to which the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs alluded, or in the difficult matter of reintegrating child soldiers in wounded, weakened societies that are often torn apart by years of conflict.

Finally, let me reiterate France's support for the various institutions which enable civil society to be associated with the work of the Security Council and to express our desire to see them strengthened and used more often. I am thinking in particular of the Arria formula, but also of the meetings organized during Security Council missions. In the field of conflict prevention, the knowledge of societies which NGOs possess is a valuable asset, as the Council has rightly realized.

In terms of the Arria meetings, we need to think about making them more interactive. My delegation is prepared to participate with NGOs in brainstorming on this subject.

Let me also take this opportunity to reiterate the proposal already made by France in this forum with respect to the monitoring of civil society via annual reports on the most vulnerable countries.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that France welcomes the fact that the Security Council today has publicly reaffirmed the extent to which civil society is an essential part of any peacebuilding endeavour.

Mr. Katti (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Let me say, Mr. Secretary, how very pleased we are to see you among us, presiding over our meeting. We wish also to congratulate you and your delegation for having organized this debate on a very relevant and timely topic.

The extreme complexity of post-cold-war conflicts has inevitably led to a radical reversal both in what we do and how we do it. Of course, there are no textbook cases and every situation has its own specificities. We must, however, recognize the conceptual and operational efforts made thus far by the United Nations and in particular by the Security Council in the search for effective responses to the challenges of peace and security. In fact, sustained attention is now being given to the issue of what might be termed the emergence of civil society in the search for lasting peace.

Without venturing into a legal and political debate on the definition of civil society, this can be considered to encompass, inter alia, religious groups, traditional communities, councils of elders, trade unions, human rights defence groups, women's and youth organizations, the media and the academic world. Those segments of civil society have been recognized as useful actors in conflict prevention and in the search for peace and its consolidation.

Thus, before elaborating on those thoughts I would like to refer to the Cardoso report (A/58/817) on future relations between the United Nations and civil society — a report which we believe constitutes an ambitious platform for partnership setting out ways and means of better integrating civil society into the overall work of the United Nations. As members know, the report recommends that the Security Council improve the planning and effectiveness of Arria formula meetings, which can further strengthen the dialogue between the Council and civil society and which my delegation will of course continue to encourage. It seems to us useful, in addition, when a specific situation requires it, for members of the Security Council on mission in the field to meet with leaders of local civil society.

We have also noted that civil society organizations, in particular in Africa, participate in peace initiatives that have been established by public authorities or by international institutions. Considerable work is also done by civil society in raising awareness, in strengthening community dialogue and in building local capacity for the pacific settlement of disputes through the organization of seminars, conferences and training workshops on the culture of peace and through providing human rights education. There are also situations where the use of traditional conflict settlement mechanisms, for example, working with councils of elders and religious or tribal chiefs, has defused crises, avoiding otherwise inevitable humanitarian tragedy. Finally, one cannot fail to mention the joint initiatives by States and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for civil harmony and national reconciliation, along with those that are transborder in nature or that involve major international NGOs.

Those are a few examples of participatory conflict management that the United Nations system and the Security Council could encourage.

Crisis prevention requires coherent and coordinated action by all actors involved, State and non-State alike. At the global level, the contribution of the United Nations, and of international financial institutions in particular, remains fundamental. From that standpoint, we believe that the effectiveness and sustainability of measures to tackle the root causes of conflict necessarily depend on the continued involvement of the various local and international actors. Such involvement can make it possible to strengthen State structures, the rule of law and democracy; to create or consolidate national crisis prevention infrastructure; to develop the economy; and, above all, to create the conditions for the flourishing of civil society and the strengthening of its potential to promote peace and stability.

In fact, a greater involvement of civil society in preventing conflict, social tension and all other phenomena that can jeopardize civil peace and the security of citizenry is to be encouraged. However, respect for the law and the legal framework by representatives of civil society remains fundamental.

Along the same lines, we believe that the contribution and involvement of international actors must strictly respect the United Nations Charter and the underlying principles of international relations — cooperation, respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States in particular, but also those that guide humanitarian action -- universality, neutrality and non-selectivity.

Mrs. Patterson (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this thematic debate. We compliment the Philippines delegation, especially Ambassador Baja, for its conduct of the presidency during this exceptional month. The leadership of your delegation resulting in the adoption of two resolutions at the summit-level meeting was particularly noteworthy.

We welcome today's thematic debate to discuss supporting and advancing democratic governance to prevent conflict, both within and across borders. In this respect, I would like to thank our three speakers on this topic.

If it is to be truly effective in helping States prevent conflict, civil society — or perhaps more appropriately, free society — must be as inclusive as possible and allow the views of a wide range of actors to be heard and considered. While they may often vary widely in their degree of organization, autonomy and influence, actors as diverse as non-governmental organizations, community, cultural and religious organizations, trade and professional associations, representatives of the private sector such as individual proprietorships, partnerships, corporations and business associations, research and academic institutions and, especially, individuals all have roles to play in a truly vibrant society. As the presidential statement we will adopt today notes, only when the widest possible range of opinion is reflected can civil society genuinely be a force for conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

Free societies are most valuable as marketplaces where free ideas compete. The free exchange of ideas is a bulwark against those who use violence or intimidation to achieve their goals. When individuals and groups have the freedom to express their views and pursue their legitimate ambitions without fear of retribution, the risk of internal conflict among them will almost certainly diminish. Efforts to expand freedom at all levels are among the most effective ways of lessening the risk of conflict.

During his recent visit here, President Bush co-hosted the launch of the United Nations Democracy Fund. Through this Fund, democratic States will work to help others join the democratic family. As Secretary of State Rice said last Saturday, the path to democracy is often long and imperfect, and it is different for every nation. One way the United Nations can support countries seeking self-government is to encourage the development of free institutions.

The United States firmly believes that building the institutions that promote and sustain freedom and democratic ideals creates the necessary foundations for free societies, and those foundations will prevent conflict. Where conflict already exists, these same principles can serve as a basis for lasting peace and reconciliation. All free societies have certain things in common. Democratic nations uphold the rule of law, impose limits on the power of State and treat women and minorities as full citizens. Such nations protect private property, free speech and religious expression. Democratic nations grow in strength because they respect and reward the creative gifts of their people and democratic nations contribute to peace and stability because they seek national greatness in the achievements of their citizens, not through oppression of elements of their own citizenry or their neighbours.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

History has shown that States are willing to do all they can in the name of peace. They have gone to war and sent their brave men and women into battle. They have shown a willingness to divide their people, compromise their territory, surrender their resources and risk their future. They have been willing to do all this in the name of peace. What they have not been too willing to do was to allow individuals or groups of individuals to participate in preventing or settling conflict. That has been reserved to States and the institutions they created.

For far too long States jealously guarded the prerogative to wage peace. Many States have resisted the entry of civil society into the realm of State-to-State relations, particularly in the area of international politics and security.

In spite of that resistance, civil society has proven itself an important partner in preventing and settling conflict. Those of us who laboured with civil society in building internal and regional peace, trust and confidence, even in the face of profound potential conflict, can attest to this.

Last year, in June, the Philippine presidency of the Security Council convened an open debate on the role of civil society in post-conflict peacebuilding. The Council's 4993rd meeting marked the first extensive discussion by the Security Council on the contribution civil society can make in ensuring that once peace is achieved, conflict is not allowed to return.

That meeting provided the historic opportunity — the first time ever, I believe — for representatives of civil society to participate in the debate of the Council. It opened the doors even wider for civil society in the most delicate affairs of States, in the maintenance of peace and security of mankind — which is the primary responsibility of this Council.

Knowing full well the role that civil society can play in carrying out its primary responsibility, the Security Council must nurture and encourage a meaningful role for civil society in preventing conflict and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Today, the Philippine presidency is once again privileged to convene an open debate on the role of civil society. The Philippines deeply appreciates the active participation of Member States in this open debate. We are also grateful to the three representatives of civil society for their views and practical suggestions. Their contribution is most valuable, as it is borne of experience and reality.

The complex nature of threats to international peace and security is a theme that has received much-deserved attention, not only during the meeting of heads of State and Government last week, but for much of the year, starting from the issuance of the report of the High-level Panel in the fall of 2004. It is now recognized that the need for a comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes is vast and urgent. We now realize that Governments have real and serious limitations in being fully responsive to the need to effectively meet these complex threats.

My own country's experience teaches this important lesson. After years of violence, the Philippines is one step away from successfully concluding its search for peace in the southern Philippines. We were able to achieve dramatic progress in our peace talks with secessionists because of the key role that our partners for peace have played. Malaysia brokered the peace talks and led the international monitoring team; Brunei and Libya contributed peace monitors; other individual members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference extended political support; and donor countries and aid agencies increased the prospects of growth and progress as peace dividends.

However, our search for peace would not have reached that far if not for the active role played by civil society. Civil society helped in making both sides understand difficult issues, study best practices and appreciate the value of peace. Religious civil society groups were primary movers in building understanding and tolerance by encouraging interfaith dialogue and cooperation. They helped reduce the potential for abuse of religion and faith as further fuel for conflict. It is this particular experience that provided one of the inspirations for my country's interfaith initiatives here in the United Nations. The role that civil society can play in promoting interfaith dialogue and cooperation was once again highlighted in last week's historic Interfaith Summit.

Communities, donor agencies and civil society must be integrated in any approach to a comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes. All sectors involved — Governments, communities, donor agencies and civil society — must coordinate efforts and act on the basis of their respective strengths to support and complement each other in achieving the goal of preventing and resolving disputes. The goal must be holistic and not merely involve the limited objective of stopping conflicts. Overall development resulting in social stability would deflect discontented elements in a society in conflict from resorting to violence again.

When conflicts break out within a State, sometimes the biggest barrier to peace is the inability or the unwillingness of parties to talk and enter dialogue. Non-governmental organizations often serve as communication links between governmental and opposition forces, even as they carry out their humanitarian and development roles. In our region, we have seen civil society actually help broker peace. In Aceh, for example, I believe that the seeds of peace

planted helped bring about the peace that we are once again building.

While its important role in peace-making activities is recognized, civil society, as a player in interdicting the conflict cycle, should also continue to evolve new and future-oriented ideas. If it positively directs its attention towards community growth and the promotion of the welfare of society, its voice will grow stronger in a way that is supported and strengthened by international and local actors.

In my region several possible conflicts have been peacefully managed, thanks to the help of civil society. Among those issues was the potentially difficult situation of the conflicting claims in the South China Sea. Track Two workshops explored the possibility of cooperative regimes in the South China Sea to build trust and confidence and to create an atmosphere in which disputes could be addressed. Today, we have the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. Civil society has helped transform the South China Sea from waters of contention to a sea of peace and cooperation.

Sixty years ago, the peoples of the world brought forth the United Nations. No role was given to civil society. Today, civil society has proven its worth in our common search for peace. States have shown their willingness to share with civil society, which is a close and meaningful partner, the task of building peace. Let us now show that together we can expand the frontiers of peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I invite the representative of Canada to take the floor.

Mr. Rock (Canada): Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to speak before the Council on the role of civil society in conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes. This discussion comes at a critical time, as we collectively begin to chart the course ahead on implementation of the outcome of last week's summit, and we are particularly indebted to the Philippine presidency for drawing attention to this issue.

It has been 15 years since the Secretary-General issued his initial report on the prevention of armed conflict. Our experience has shown that conflict prevention is something that Governments cannot undertake effectively in isolation. Across a spectrum of conflict prevention roles, civil society organizations provide crucial assistance. The unique attributes of civil society — including its independent nature, its global reach and its high level of community integration — make civil society an invaluable partner for the Council and our national Governments.

Canada welcomes the recent adoption of Security Council resolution 1625 (2005) and its declaration on strengthening the effectiveness of the Security Council's role in the prevention of armed conflict. Resolution 1625 (2005) identifies clearly the importance of civil society contributions and the need to work to strengthen the capacity of civil society.

We all know the important role of civil society organizations, both indigenous and international, in crisis detection and early warning. But civil society organizations fulfil widely varying functions across the conflict cycle — everything from advocacy to accompanying vulnerable populations as they move to long-term monitoring and reporting. They can also play an instrumental role across thematic lines, for example, in ensuring the inclusion of a gender perspective and a role for women in the prevention and the resolution of conflicts, as called for in the World Summit declaration.

In Canada's experience, civil society partners are also valuable in efforts to mobilize political will on a global scale, as evidenced by the key role played by civil society coalitions in the campaign to ban landmines and in efforts to establish the International Criminal Court.

In June of this year, more than 500 civil society organizations from across 15 regions gathered here in New York and produced the Global Action Agenda of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. The Action Agenda charts the range of functions that civil society can perform and provides important recommendations for national Governments and the United Nations system. We support and encourage its implementation.

The Action Agenda stresses the need for the international community to shift its focus from reaction to prevention. Better prevention requires better and more timely information, as well as a rapid response.

(*spoke in French*)

Today, I would like to focus on three of the more concrete ways in which we can collectively move ahead in the coming months to better incorporate civil society organizations and maximize our effectiveness in that regard.

First, the Council has already begun to avail itself more frequently of civil society expertise and information through the Arria — formula mechanism. We welcome that but would strongly urge the Council to deepen that trend. For example, it could consider a more proactive use of informal meetings and broad consultations with civil society groups, not only to gather information on situations already of interest but also to allow groups to sound the alarm on newly emerging conflicts and issues of concern. That approach could lead to the Council's timely consideration of those issues and a more rapid and effective Council response.

Secondly, monitoring and reporting mechanisms that are in place for specific situations should clearly identify the mechanisms through which civil society groups can channel information to the Security Council for consideration or intervention. An excellent example of that is the recent adoption of Council resolution 1612 (2005), which establishes a monitoring and reporting mechanism for children in armed conflict and expressly includes the participation of the relevant civil society organizations. The Council should consider applying that model in other areas of its activity.

Finally, as we move to implement the outcome of last week's summit through the establishment of both the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, we need to ensure that their structures and mandates permit them access to the most relevant and timely information and expertise available on country situations, including that provided by civil society organizations in the field. By involving civil society from the start we can be sure that our efforts will be based on valid information and be mutually supportive.

In conclusion, Canada strongly believes that civil society organizations are not only the eyes and ears of the international community on the ground but also our collective conscience. We therefore strongly encourage more open cooperation with civil society and look forward to working in coming months for the more extensive participation of civil society in United Nations conflict prevention efforts.

The President: After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council.

"Recognizing the complex nature of threats to international peace and security, the Security Council underlined the need for a broad strategy for conflict prevention and pacific settlement of disputes in line with Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations.

"The Security Council stressed that the essential responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments, and that the United Nations and the international community can play an important role in support of national efforts for conflict prevention and can assist in building national capacity in this field and recognized the important supporting role of civil society.

"The Security Council reaffirmed the need for this strategy to be based on engagement with Governments, regional and subregional organizations as well as civil society organizations, as appropriate, reflecting the widest possible range of opinions.

"The Security Council underlined the potential contributions of a vibrant and diverse civil society in conflict prevention, as well as in the peaceful settlement of disputes. They noted that a well-functioning civil society has the advantage of specialized knowledge, capabilities, experience, links with key constituencies, influence and resources, which can assist parties in conflict to achieve peaceful solution to disputes.

"The Security Council noted that a vigorous and inclusive civil society could provide community leadership, help shape public opinion, and facilitate as well as contribute to reconciliation between conflicting communities. The Security Council also underscored the role that these actors could play in providing a bridge to dialogue and other confidence-building measures between parties in conflict.

"The Security Council underscored and will strengthen its relationship with civil society, including as appropriate, through, inter alia, the

use of 'Arria-formula' meetings and meetings with local civil society organizations during Security Council missions.

"The Security Council agreed to keep this item under review."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2005/42.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.